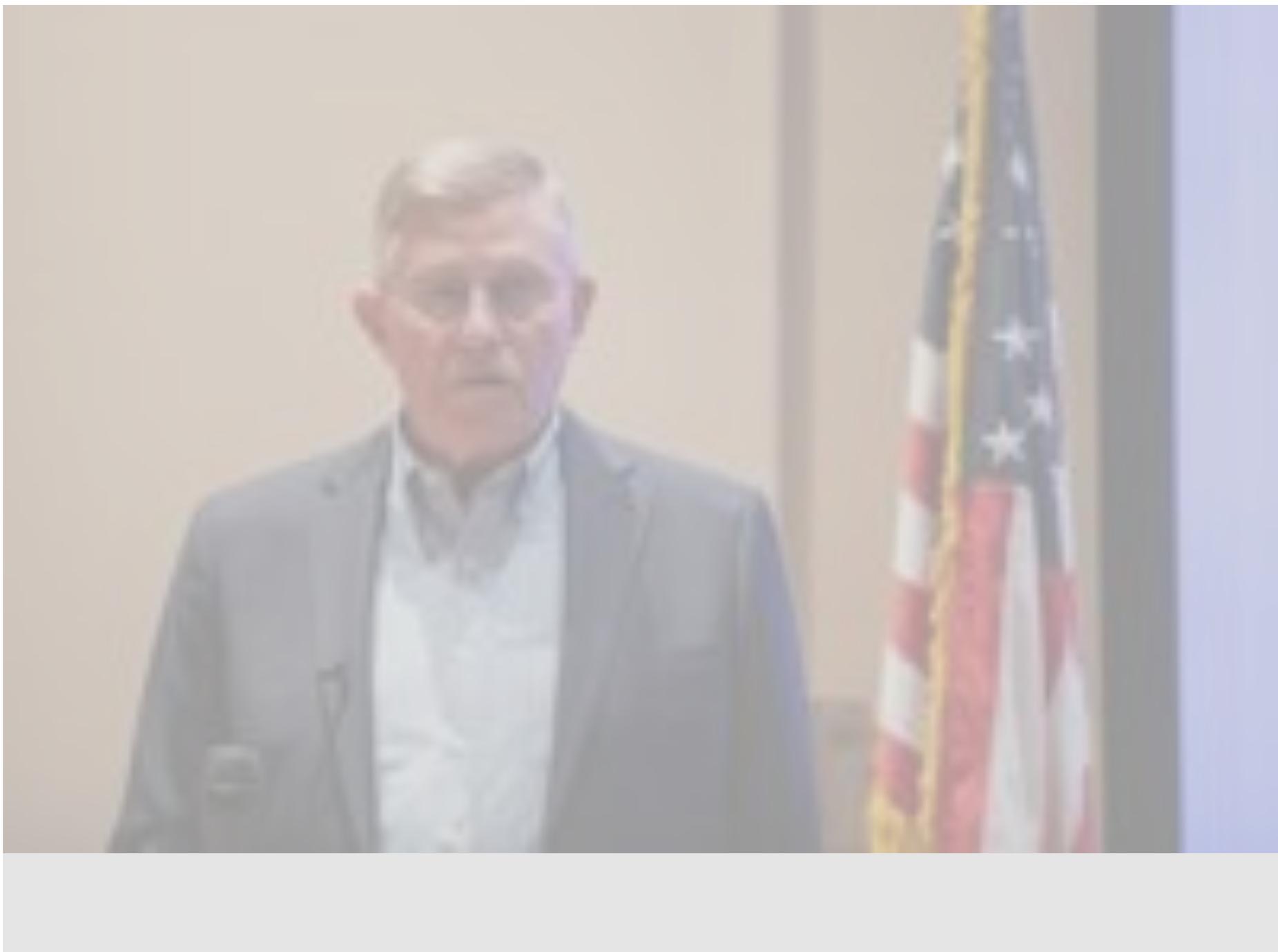


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Caboni honors nation's veterans with wreath-laying

By AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com

Nov 11, 2020



Vietnam Veteran Capt. William R. Houston, Class of 1964 at Western Kentucky University, says a few words after being inducted into the WKU ROTC Hall of Fame in the auditorium at Jody Richards Hall on Wednesday, Nov. 11, 2020. Houston, who served in Vietnam gathering intelligence and conducting aerial reconnaissance for his battalion command group, was awarded a Silver Star and Bronze Star for acts of gallantry during his time of service in the U.S. Army. (Grace Ramey/photo@bgdailynews.com)



Shortly before laying a memorial wreath at Western Kentucky University's Guthrie Bell Tower on Wednesday to commemorate Veterans Day, WKU President Timothy Caboni addressed a crowd under a gray, overcast sky. Behind him, granite etchings of WKU alumni and veterans peered out like ghosts from the clock tower's base.

"Here, at the Guthrie Bell Tower, we look upon the images of those who've served for us to live freely. I'm humbled by those individuals" and all Hilltoppers who've served their country, Caboni said, speaking to event attendees at 11 a.m. Wednesday.

Originally named Armistice Day – after a cessation of hostilities between the Allied nations and Germany went into effect on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month and effectively ended World War I – Nov. 11, 1918, is generally regarded as the end of "the war to end all wars," according to a history maintained by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The early concept for the celebration was for a day of parades and public meetings and a brief suspension of business at 11 a.m. local time.

However, in 1954, after World War II and the greatest mobilization of soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen in the country's history, Congress renamed the national holiday Veterans Day at the urging of military service organizations. From that day onward, the holiday commemorated American veterans of all wars.

“Let it never be forgotten that the price of freedom is high,” Caboni said. “Let us never forget those who paid for it.”

Caboni also honored WKU's military students, a contingent of which gathered to participate in a flag ceremony for the event.

“To our WKU ROTC cadets, thank you for choosing military service and for putting our nation before yourselves,” Caboni said.

Shortly thereafter, attendees moved to nearby Jody Richards Hall, where retired U.S. Army Capt. William R. Houston Jr. was inducted into the university's ROTC Hall of Fame.

A Kentucky native, Houston was born and raised in Central City. In 1964, he became a distinguished military graduate of WKU.

Serving in the Army, his first assignment was in D-Troop, 1st Recon Squadron, 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment near the East/West German border, according to a WKU news release. Following the birth of his daughter and a promotion to captain, Houston was sent to Vietnam for service in the 4th Battalion, 23rd Mechanized Infantry, 25th Infantry Division. That was one day after the beginning of the brutal 1968 Tet Offensive.

Houston served in an intelligence role, conducting aerial reconnaissance for his battalion command group. At times, he assumed command of that group, and in August 1968 he received intelligence of an imminent attack during the night.

On Aug. 22, 1968, with little manpower, Houston and his troops warded off an attack at 11 p.m. military time, fighting until dawn. His unit sustained few casualties compared to 25 of the enemy killed in action. During his service, Houston was awarded the Silver Star and Bronze Star, the WKU news release said.

“I’m just humbled,” Houston said of his induction into WKU’s ROTC Hall of Fame. “I have thoughts about my friends – fellow soldiers, fellow officers – that are no longer with us. I’m here today to recognize their service and what they gave.”

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MORE INFORMATION



SLIDE SHOW: Veterans honored with wreath-laying ceremony, ROTC Hall of Fame induction

Aaron Mudd

Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.

